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Coffee Profits Bring Social Benefits



Photo: Chemonics International

The community of El Naranjo, located in the northern coffee-growing region of Madriz, now has a preschool, thanks to a donation by the San Juan del Rio Coco Cooperatives Union.

With assistance from USAID, the cooperatives that make up this organization achieved both Fair Trade and organic certification and were able to sell 150,000 pounds of certified coffee at substantially higher prices than conventional coffee. The members of the union decided to invest part of their profits in social projects to benefit their families and the entire community. In its first socially motivated project, the San

Juan del Rio Coco Cooperatives Union initiated the construction of the Los Ositos (Little Bear Cubs) preschool that will benefit the children of El Naranjo, one of the poorest communities in this region. Parents and other members of the community became involved in the construction and transportation of materials to the site and the school began holding classes in August 2005. Now the children here have the prospect, for the first time, of attending preschool in a new well-constructed facility that provides a safe learning environment.

With the quality control that coffee farmers have learned through the USAID program, sales are expected to climb in the Fair Trade and organic markets, and the San Juan del Rio Coco Cooperatives Union plans to continue investing in a new social project in one community each year.

Students of the new Los Ositos Preschool, financed by increased profits from Fair Trade coffee sales, pose with their teacher, Santos Rafael Carazo, left.